

Dear Heavenly Father,

Praise

Paul ended his letter by saying, “The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all” (2 Cor 13:14). I praise you today as the Triune God. Each Person in the Godhead lives in loving relationship with the others, and you all work together for my good and your glory. Hallelujah for the grace and love and fellowship of the Lord God Almighty!

Today in Your Word

Today you shared with me the last part of Paul’s fourth letter to the church at Corinth (called 2 Corinthians). Having urged the Corinthians to finish their collection for the churches in Judea, Paul now addressed the issue of the “super-apostles” that had infiltrated the congregation. These men based their apostolic claims on eloquent speeches and ecstatic visions (2 Cor 10:10; 12:1, 12), and they taught the Corinthians “another Jesus...a different Spirit...a different gospel” (2 Cor 11:4). They also scoffed at Paul’s lack of skill in public speaking, and they suggested that his refusal to accept financial support was an indication of how insignificant and ineffective he was (2 Cor 11:6–7). Paul defended himself against these slurs, and his comments have much to teach me about spiritual maturity. First, Paul recognized that although he walked in the flesh, he waged war by the Spirit (2 Cor 10:3–4). He relied, not on human skill or ingenuity, but on the power of God. Because of this, you enabled him to destroy false arguments and take captive evil thoughts, and you will enable me to do the same. Second, Paul did not evaluate himself or his ministry by comparing himself with others. Instead, he based his sense of self-worth and success on whether or not he had obeyed you. I need to follow Paul’s example and make sure my boasting is in your power and in your approval of my work. Third, Paul was more concerned about the spiritual welfare of the Corinthians than he was about his own image. He had deliberately shared the gospel with them free of charge so he could avoid being a burden to the church. He knew this might be misunderstood, but he had done it anyway out of love and affection for them. His desire to put the needs of others first is one I would do well to emulate. Fourth, Paul did not hesitate to expose the so-called apostles as a threat to the Corinthians. He told them plainly that “such men are false apostles, deceitful workmen, disguising themselves as apostles of Christ. And no wonder, for even Satan disguises himself as an angel of light” (2 Cor 11:13–14). Paul was bold in his confrontation of such men, and I must be quick to do the same. Fifth, Paul played the “fool” by telling the Corinthians of his religious heritage, his toils and hardships, and his many visions and revelations. He did this, not to exalt himself, but to show the Corinthians that he was indeed a true apostle of Jesus Christ. Paul’s reluctance to engage in boasting showed that he wanted his reputation to rest on his public record. His words and deeds were open to all, and he was genuinely concerned lest others think too highly of him. What a godly attitude—all too often I find myself wishing people thought more highly of me than they do! Sixth, Paul recognized his own tendency to become conceited, and he accepted your “thorn in the flesh” as necessary for his soul (2 Cor 12:9). This teaches me to see my weaknesses as opportunities for you to display your power, “for when I am weak, then I am strong” (2 Cor 12:10).

Reflection

Paul told the Corinthians, “Examine yourselves, to see whether you are in the faith. Test yourselves” (2 Cor 13:5). Do I make it a point to analyze my spiritual condition? Am I regularly testing myself to see if I need to repent of some sin or change some behavior?

Request

Father, I long to have the same spiritual maturity that Paul had. Help me to walk each day in the power of the Holy Spirit and to give myself wholeheartedly to the building of your kingdom.

Thanksgiving

Thank you for this strong yet gentle entreaty which Paul sent to the Corinthians (2 Cor 10:1). May its message live on in my heart and its truth guide my steps in the days to come!

In Jesus’ name, Amen.

Suggested Hymn: “[Strength in Weakness](#)” – Isaac Watts.

Meditation Verse: 2 Corinthians 12:9.